

Introduction: Dismiss kids... Celebrate?? Excited about the rest of this month: 1) Mother's Day message (Bring mom! Come with mom! She might receive a rose. You might be able to get a picture with her at our photo booth.) 2) May 20th – My good friend, Stephen Mook, from Generation Church is going to be here with us. That boy can preach, and I've asked him to share what I believe will be a stirring message to keep pushing us forward! Pg. _____

“Working Among the Lions” **Daniel 1:1-21; 6:1-28**

Work Series... summary

1. Week 1: We work because God works. He made us in his image. That's why we should: Connect every hour of our work to God's work.
2. Week 2: Raise your voice through our vocational calling: doing what God made us to do, serving who God made us to serve, and watching God work through our work.
3. Week 3: Pastor Jon gave us some great truth around how to make pleasing God the central aim of our work.

Today: I want to talk about how to navigate difficulty at work. We live in a broken world and work with broken people, which means our work will never be free of imperfection. For many of you, trouble and difficulty in the workplace seems to be the air you breathe when you punch the clock, which seems to make it very difficult for you to overflow while you're on the clock.

Over the past month, I've heard you identify many difficulties at work. Here are a few...

- 1) Work pressure and stress management. There is pressure to perform, pressure to meet quotas, pressure to achieve results, pressure to please supervisors. Anyone feel a little pressure at work? Anyone feel a lot of pressure at work?
- 2) For some the greatest difficulty at work is the workload. There is simply too much work to do. One person said: "I always get out of work late (my work thinks my life is work and nothing else!)"
- 3) What about difficulty with other people? Someone said: "My day would be better if they weren't working today." This was not during one of our Redemption Hill Staff convos - just to set the record straight... (I hope our staff doesn't say that about me! :)
- 4) Who has been the victim of unethical work practices?
- 5) Who has been the victim of the political game?
- 6) Who has been the victim of other people taking the credit for your work?

If you think you have it bad, let me introduce you to a guy named Daniel. Daniel was taken captive by the Babylonians, along with thousands of other people, and forced to work for a king who ruthlessly devouring the nations he conquered and took into captivity (Jer. 50:17-18).

Daniel's story of work in Babylon will help us learn how we can work among the lions... Lions, as we will see, were both a metaphorical and literal reality for Daniel: metaphorical in chapter 1, literal in chapter 6.

For us, they represent all of the challenges and brokenness that make up our workplaces.

As we dive into the story of Daniel and his work in the godless Babylonian empire, we are going to be encouraged to...

The Point: Stay devoted in the difficult in order to overflow on the clock.

Let's look at this story Read *Daniel 1*

T: Let me give you three truths to motivate you to stay devoted in the difficult in order to overflow on the clock...

I. Who are you are is more important than what you do.

Difficult environments often produce sticky situations. For Daniel, there was an immediate clash between his faith and his work.

Thankfully, in Christ, we should not have this tension today. We can eat our Meat Lover's from Regina or Torta Pastor (with the Carnita's and business sauce) any day of the week. But this was not the case for Daniel.

To eat the king's food would have compromised his commitment to God. Look at verse 8: "But Daniel resolved..."

Why?

- 1) It could have been meat restricted by the dietary requirements found in Leviticus (3rd book in the Bible).
- 2) It also could have been food were first offered "sacrificially to the Babylonian gods before being sent to the king and was therefore associated with idolatrous worship." (NAC?)
- 3) Maybe Daniel refused to eat the king's delicacies while the rest of the Israelites suffered in less desirable conditions.

Here's the bottom line: Daniel's resolve revealed his devotion.

If you're anything like me, when trouble and difficulty comes, you start looking for solutions, rather than focusing on your relationship with God to make sure whatever you do in the situation is a reflection of his holiness.

- **"Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16) Wow!**
- Verse 8 says, he knew that eating the king's food would "defile him."
 - Defile means to corrupt, to introduce a pollutant to that which is otherwise pure.
 - It means to desecrate something that is sacred.
- That's the kind of concern God wants us to have for how we live our lives, everywhere, including work.
- Your soul is sacred before God. He wants you to keep it pure.

Work Sermon 4 - Daniel...

How is your work tempting you to deviate from God's will? Are you tempted to cut corners, fudge numbers, mistreat the people around you, return evil for evil?

- Your actions to others, your decisions, your words (whether face to face or over emails :) because you know I can say something unkind but then say: "You can hear a person's tone over email. I didn't mean it that way. You're just being sensitive!")
- As we follow Jesus, we must continually learn how to live in the workplace but not of the workplace, in so far as work would lead us to deviate from his plans for our lives.

And here's the beautiful result...

- "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)
 - When we walk with God, he guides us.
 - Like Daniel, when you face that difficult person or situation at work, you have a different set of resources and guidance to help you navigate the difficulty.

Now, why is this so impressive?

- At first glance this request seems simple enough (give the vegetables and water please, not the meat and wine), but this was courageous and risky for a number of reasons.
 1. The King's food would have been Food Network quality, you know what I'm saying? Holiness usually requires us to forsake the convenient and comfortable route. If your devotion does not make you uncomfortable at times, it's probably time to question the level of your devotion.
 2. Peer pressure... It seems that many other Israelites participated in the king's table. [Comparison is a curse. Unless we are comparing ourselves to Christ. Stop comparing yourself to everyone else's spirituality! We were just praying about this Friday morning...]
 3. Most importantly, not only could have their decision jeopardized their opportunity to advance in the king's court, it could have cost them their life.
 - Look back at verse 10: If the king's official's life was in danger, how much more would Daniel's life be on the line! This could have been received as a direct insult to King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - What's more important? Your integrity or your job security? Your commitment to God or how much you make or accomplishments at work?
 - One more thought. It is so impressive because
 4. This resolve was driven by incredible faith.
 - The more you spend time with God, the more you will trust him and BELIEVE that he will come through!

- Faith sees the unseen. Read verses 12-13
- What is he saying? God will move supernaturally to take care of us and strengthen us beyond your expectation.

T: When work gets difficult, the most important thing is not to look to solutions around us, but to allow God to keep working his devotion in us. Who we are before him is more important than what we do. #2.

II. God is over all that opposes you.

Sovereign over sovereigns

- God was not asleep during the Babylonian invasion, when they sieged Jerusalem and carried out the people into captivity.
- Verse two says: “And the Lord gave...”
 - The word for “Lord” is significant. The author calls God “Adonai,” which means, “owner, ruler, sovereign.” God is sovereign over all sovereigns, King over all kings, the Ultimate boss over every boss.
 - After all, God predicted this exile through Moses hundreds of years before (Deut 30) and Jeremiah in the immediate years leading up to the exile (Jer. 25), and he allowed the exile as a way to wake his people up from their own idolatry and win them back.
- It would be a mistake to read the Book of Daniel and assume the story is primarily about Daniel. While Daniel’s faithfulness in a hostile environment is exemplary, this is ultimately a story of God’s faithfulness to help his people in exile and ultimately bring them through their time of captivity.
- When you face difficulty at work (or ANYWHERE: friendships, marriage, with your health), do not first look within, do not first look around for help, LOOK UP to God who is faithful in every season and in perfect control of every quark in the universe.
- In our Bible Reading last month, Proverbs 21:1 told us: “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.”
- If you were to keep reading Daniel you would see how true this is. God sends Nebuchadnezzar dreams and gives only Daniel the ability to interpret those dreams. God humbles him in his pride (4:28ff). God saves his people from a fiery death (chapter 3 is so good). In chapter 5, God crashes the party of King Belshazzar and makes his

Work Sermon 4 - Daniel...

heart melt, by writing the coming destruction of Babylon on the wall of the palace (“the writing’s on the wall.”).

- In chapter 6, some of Daniel’s evil coworkers (anyone have some evil coworkers? - pray for them, love them), these evil coworkers were so envious of him that they connived the new king, King Darius, to sign an injunction that would give a death sentence to anyone who prayed to his God.
 - [Read 6:4-7. (Because of his excellent work, no charge could be brought against him. He was blameless. His character and work were impeccable.)]
 - Read 6:10 -
 - Then Daniel was thrown into the den of lions and verse 19 tells the rest of the story (read 19-22)

T: Daniel is a book of hope. Like the Book of Revelation, it is written to help us persevere in the midst of suffering and difficulty.

- And listen: even when God does not send supernatural favor to pull you out or through of a situation as fast as you’d like, he loves to send his supernatural strength and supernatural wisdom to stand firm and continue pointing to his greatness and loving your neighbor, through your work.

God is over every difficulty and God is working in every difficult moment.

- Not only did God perform signs and wonders to grab the attention of the King and protect his people, he also shined the light of his favor on Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in their work.
 - Read 1:17 Everything we have is a gift from God. Our physical strength, intellectual gifts, skills and competencies. “What do you have that you have not received?” (1 Cor. 4:6)
 - Daniel did great work, because God empowered his work. Read 1:20
- Keep working on your work. Keep asking God for grace to get better in your job. You should want to be the best worker on your floor on your team - not for bragging rights, but simply to do your best before God and for the sake of others.

T: Like Daniel, we can overflow when opposed because our God is over the opposition!
Finally...

III. God uses our work to tell of his work .

Work Sermon 4 - Daniel...

As Daniel remained faithful to God, people learned why he lived the way he lived. They discovered why he didn't fear losing his job or losing his life. The kings Daniel served, on multiple occasions, were compelled to speak words of praise about the supremacy of Daniel's god.

Read 2:47

Read 3:28

Read 4:34-35

If God has called us to work and our work will make up 94000 hours over the next forty years, don't you know God wants to use our work and our work relationships to point people to him, to help people discover the ultimate purpose for their lives, to help them see that work or money or accomplish will never ultimately satisfy them, only a relationship with the God who made them.

Daniel was sent by God into the king's court to represent him. Anyone disagree?

What about you? You have no less a calling than Daniel. God has assigned you a particular role for a particular season (you remember the sermon on vocation?). Has God not sent you to represent him in your work?

The 9 to 5 movement... Revival happens when the church gets serious about devoted themselves and their work to God. Awakening happens when the church gets serious about overflowing on the clock and leveraging their work and work relationships to help people get to know Jesus!

I know this is hard. One friend told me his greatest difficulty at work is: "Having the confidence to speak about Christ when so many don't believe in him. 10 vs 1 gets a little intimidating." 10 to 1; 50 to 1; 100 to 1.

God has you there so that it goes to 10:2, 10:3. How?

The "9 to 5" movement

1. **Do not be a silent Christian.** (Weekend plans... Going to group on Tuesday. Summer > Serve Medford/Soccer Nights)
2. **Do not be an obnoxious Christian.** (Case of Bibles - Silent >> Obnoxious = Two extremes)
3. **Do good work.**
4. **Be a good friend.**
5. **Create and take opportunities to talk about Jesus.**
 - Take a coworker to lunch.
 - Give God the credit when you.
 - Be ready to give people God's wisdom when they come to you.
 - 3 Circles

We have less to fear than we think we do!

Work is a place for witness. As you are full of God, how could you not overflow there? You are not just a software developer, nurse, or realtor. You are a Christian software developer, a Christian nurse, a Christian realtor.

Which reminds us... our work is ultimately about Jesus...

Conclusion:

For everyone in Christ, you have the True and Greater Daniel in you. When Jesus worked in hostile environment, when people wanted to take his life, and ultimately put him death, he remained devoted, he trusted in the Father's sovereignty over the opposition, he fulfilled his love mission to the point that he could pray in John 17:4

“ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” (John 17:4)

And as he hung on the cross, his dying words were...

“It is finished.” (John 19:30)

*Prayer: **How do you need prayer to overflow on the clock?***

What difficulty are you facing? (1 Peter 4:8)

Need work? Want new work?

Want to excel in your work?